Stanner Award winner announced

Wiradjuri Nyemba lawyer, researcher, teacher and advocate Dr Virginia Marshall was announced as the recipient of the 2015 W E H Stanner Award today. Her winning manuscript entitled ‘A web of Aboriginal water rights: examining the competing Aboriginal claim for water property rights and interests in Australia’ chosen as the unanimous winner.

The biennial Stanner Award is open to all aspiring Indigenous authors of academic works, with the author of the winning submission receiving $5000 in prize money, an inscribed glass eel trap sculpture, and mentoring and editorial support to turn their manuscript into a publication.

AIATSIS Chairperson Professor Mick Dodson AM announced the winner in a ceremony at Parliament House in Canberra saying over its history the award has led to some important and highly successful books for AIATSIS.

"Once again this year we had a strong field of entries, but the judges were unanimous in identifying a clear winner," Professor Dodson said.

"This year’s entry was noted as being ‘a standout in terms of its interest area and scholarship’, ‘well-written, well-argued, with an audience beyond the very immediate’ and that it ‘brought a whole new dimension to water rights in the legal frame’. It will be an extremely timely book and I congratulate Dr Marshall."

Dr Virginia Marshall, who commenced her doctoral research at the Macquarie University Law School, was galvanised by the awareness that Australian law had deprived Aboriginal people across Australia of their fundamental rights to share the water resources of the nation.

Dr Marshall said her research aimed to foster a deeper understanding of Aboriginal water rights and interests and to help address Aboriginal disadvantage by promoting a paradigm shift in water law and policy frameworks.

“Aboriginal water rights and interests is integral to any national dialogue on Aboriginal health, just as unemployment and low incomes are linked to poor health outcomes for all Australians,” Dr Marshall said.

"If governments choose to ignore Aboriginal water rights and interests “the dire conditions of Aboriginal communities will remain unchanged.”

The Award acknowledges the significant contribution of the late Emeritus Professor W E H (Bill) Stanner to the establishment and development of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), and is administered by its publishing arm Aboriginal Studies Press.

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